

Stranded in a strange land

15 Bangladeshis in Vietnam cry out for rescue

PORIMOL PALMA

As trafficking of Bangladeshis to Vietnam came to the fore after 27 stranded nationals demonstrated in Hanoi last week, 15 others are crying out to be rescued from the Southeast Asian country.

They said they were taken to Vietnam in early January, with promise of regular jobs in shipyards and minimum monthly salary of 650 US dollars. They were charged Tk 4-5 lakh each.

They were all given smart cards, which means Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, the regulatory body for overseas jobs sector in Bangladesh, issued them emigration clearance and licensed recruiting agents processed their visas, they said.

"After reaching Vietnam, we discovered that there is no fixed job for us. Bangladeshi brokers Atiq, Saiful and Jabbar sold us to a Vietnamese labour supply company called MPH," Faridul Islam, one of the 15 Bangladeshis stranded in Guntao area of Ho Chi Minh City, told this newspaper.

He said in the last six months, they were taken to many companies, neither of which could offer any job, except for a few days of employment.

"I was appointed to work for a glass factory for 22 days and was paid money equal to only Tk 7,000," Faridul, from Mymensingh's Trishal upazila, told The Daily Star over phone over the weekend.

Some others were employed by a few factories for a couple of days, but a percentage of the payments was pocketed by the brokers, he said.

"Throughout the last six months, we had to manage our own food and bring money from home to survive. I brought installments of Tk 50,000 twice," he continued.

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After finding out that he is Covid-19 negative, a young man celebrates by taking a selfie with the test result certificate in his hand and friends in the background at the capital's Mugda General Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Focus on online cattle markets

Home ministry suggests ahead of Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday suggested for giving an extra focus on online cattle markets ahead of Eid-ul-Azha to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

No cattle market will be allowed on the road and cattle-laden trucks must have banners mentioning the destination marketplace. Besides, such trucks will not be allowed to make a stoppage on the road.

The decisions came from a meeting at the home ministry, to review law and order situation ahead of the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

The meeting was chaired by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan.

Senior Secretary of the Public Security Department Mostafa Kamal Uddin, Secretary of the Security Services division Md Shahiduzzaman, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed and senior official of the ministry attended the meeting, among others.

According to a statement signed by home ministry's

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Rajshahi airport remains shut due to doctor shortage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

After two months of suspension, flight operations on domestic routes finally resumed on June 1. However, even though most domestic airports of the country have started operations, Rajshahi's Shah Makhdom Airport is still closed due to the shortage of specialised doctors.

The airport has been lying shut since March 26 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, airport manager Md Sefatur Rahman said.

Last month, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) sent a letter to the Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi seeking a specialised doctor at the airport in order to maintain health guidelines, Civil Surgeon Dr Enamul Haque said. However, he was unable to do it.

"Appointing a specialised doctor at the airport is a luxury for us at the moment. We cannot even place doctors to other priority locations such as at railway stations, bus stands, and markets, which are more vulnerable than airports," Dr Haque also said.

This is because most specialised doctors are busy dealing with patients at hospitals, he said.

"Besides, what will be the function of a specialist doctor at the airport when necessary testing equipment aren't available there?" the civil surgeon said, adding, "The airport already has a deputy assistant community medical officer appointed who can perform primary check-ups."

While airports at Chattogram, Sayedpur, Sylhet, Jashore and Barishal have begun operation in three phases, airports at Rajshahi and Cox's Bazar are yet to open, airport manager Sefatur said.

He said the airports are unable to begin operations due to lack of doctors.

However, the authorities are considering reopening the airports with the medical officers or by appointing authorised doctors, he said.

"Our staffers are attending office regularly, waiting for orders for opening the airport," Sefatur said. "We are ready to resume operations."

368 killed in road accidents in June

Says Jatri Kalyan Samity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 368 people were killed and 518 others were injured in 358 road accidents across the country in June, a passengers' welfare body said yesterday.

For June, the death toll increased by 57.34 percent compared to that of May. In the meantime, the number of accidents and injured persons increased by 56.14 and 43.82 percent respectively, Jatri Kalyan Samity said in its monthly report, prepared based on reports published in national and regional newspapers and online news portals.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the welfare body, explained the sudden increase in the numbers saying, "In May, public transport movement was off due to the government enforced shutdown to contain the coronavirus. This is why the number of accidents and deaths were comparatively low for the month."

Additionally, he highlighted the lack of accountability of road safety agencies and their unabated corruption as one of the reasons behind the increase in statistics.

The report said at least 15 people were killed and four others were injured in 20 railway track accidents in June. In waterways, at least 45 people died, 60 were injured, and 10 went missing in 17 incidents, the report added.

Bar council written exam likely in Sept

12,878 candidates in limbo, some protest near SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since July 7, around 400 candidates have been demonstrating on the premises of Sonali Bank adjacent to the Supreme Court, demanding yearly enrolment of applicants in district courts, and enlistment of those who have passed the MCQ exams of 2017 and 2020 into the bar council.

Meanwhile, the bar council enrolment committee at a meeting on Saturday decided to take the written exam in September.

Ainul Islam Bishal, convener of Bangladesh Apprentice Lawyers' Association, said, "There is already a huge backlog. Hence our request was to enlist the 12,878 apprentice lawyers [into the bar council], who passed the MCQ exam in 2017 and 2020."

Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun, vice chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, on Saturday said they have decided to hold the written part of the exam in September. "We

discussed this in a virtual meeting. I cannot give an exact date yet as there is still a lot to be discussed -- exam halls must be arranged and we have to speak with educational institutions about this," he said.

The five-member committee consists of one judge from the Appellate Division, two judges of the High Court Division, the attorney general and a member of the bar council.

The protesters, however, said they are not convinced with this promise. Rather, they think that this is just an excuse to disperse them from the SC premises, said Ainul Islam Bishal.

The council's enrolment exams are supposed to be held every year in three steps -- one multiple choice question exam, one written exam and finally a viva voce.

The last time this process was completed in its entirety was in 2017, and no yearly enrolment was done in the last two years.

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AMASSING WEALTH ILLEGALLY

ACC summons wife of lawmaker Shahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday summoned Kuwait-detained Bangladeshi lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam's wife and sister-in-law for quizzing over amassing wealth illegally.

In a letter signed by ACC's deputy director Md Salauddin, Shahid's wife lawmaker Selina Islam and sister-in-law Jesmin Akter were asked to appear before the commission on July 22, confirmed ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya. There is allegation against Shahid, also director of NRB Commercial Bank, Selina and Jesmin of amassing wealth beyond the known source of income and laundering money abroad, the letter reads.

"For sake of fair investigation, it is necessary to record your statement," it said. On June 17, ACC imposed travel embargo on Shahid's wife, daughter and sister-in-law.

ACC asked the immigration department to prevent them from leaving the country. Earlier, the commission asked Selina and Jesmin to submit copies of their passports.

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SC'S APPELLATE DIVISION

Full bench to start holding virtual proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After four months, a full bench of Supreme Court's Appellate Division will start judicial functions virtually from today to hear and dispose of urgent cases.

The six-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, will begin proceedings at 10am and continue till 1:15pm.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court administration issued a circular, saying the bench will operate judicial functions on Monday and Thursday every week till further order.

The chief justice has decided to run virtual proceedings at the Appellate Division, strictly following health guidelines, according to the circular.

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LIBYA KILLINGS

Sohag denied bail again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A virtual court in Dhaka yesterday again rejected a bail petition of Sohag Hossain in a case filed over trafficking of 26 Bangladeshis, who were killed in Libya on May 28.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Sohag's lawyer submitted a criminal appeal against the rejection order of the lower court through an email.

In the order, the judge said it is a sensational case and the investigation officer -- CID Inspector AHM Rashed Fazal -- found his involvement in trafficking Bangladeshis to Libya. So, his bail was rejected.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on June 10 rejected his bail after his lawyer submitted a petition through videoconferencing.

On Thursday, the same court rejected bail petitions of two other accused -- Khalid Chowdhury and Mosammam Sanzida -- in the case.

Criminal Investigation Department on June 8 arrested Sohag, Khalid and Sanzida from different parts of Dhaka. Later, they were produced before a Dhaka court, which sent them to jail.

So far, 26 cases have been filed against 300 people with different police stations in connection with the incident. Sixty-seven people have so far been arrested and of them, 36 -- including an employee of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training -- were arrested by the CID. Of them, 20 have already given confessional statements in court.

FRAUDULENCE BY 2 HOSPITALS

Bring the accused to book quickly: Quader

UNB, Dhaka

People are astonished at the fraudulence of two hospitals in coronavirus sample testing, Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

The minister made the remark while briefing reporters online from his official residence.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, urged the authorities concerned to bring all the accused to justice soon after investigations.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina neither spared wrongdoers in the past nor will do so in the future, he added.

About cattle markets before the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, the minister said permission will not be given to arrange such markets whimsically at any place beside highways.

Regarding experts' fear about coronavirus transmission during Eid, Quader said the National Technical Advisory Committee has advised not to allow setting up animal markets in some districts.

It will be better if their advice is followed properly, the minister added.

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